Constructive Programme

ITS MEANING AND PLACE

M. K. GANDHI

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CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

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BY
M. K. GANDHI

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FOREWORD

This is a thoroughly revised edition of the *Constructive Programme* which I first wrote in 1941. The items included in it have not been arranged in any order, certainly not in the order of their importance. When the reader discovers that a particular subject though important in itself in terms of Independence does not find place in the programme, he should know that the omission is not intentional. He should unhesitatingly add to my list and let me know. My list does not pretend to be exhaustive; it is merely illustrative. The reader will see several new and important additions.

Readers, whether workers and volunteers or not, should definitely realize that the constructive programme is the truthful and non-violent way of winning Poorna Swaraj. Its wholesale fulfilment is complete Independence. Imagine all the forty crores of people busying themselves with the whole of the constructive programme which is designed to build up the nation from the very botton upward. Can anybody dispute the proposition that it must mean complete Independence in every sense of the expression, including the ousting of foreign domination? When the critics laugh at the proposition, what they mean is that forty crores of people will never co-operate in the effort to fulfil the programme. No doubt, there is considerable truth in the scoff. My answer is, it is still worth the attempt. Given an indomitable will on the part of a band of earnest workers, the programme is as workable as any other and more so than most. Anyway, I have no substitute for it, if it is to be based on non-violence.

Civil Disobedience, mass or individual, is an aid to constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolt. Training is necessary as well for civil disobedience as for armed revolt. Only the ways are different. Action in either

case takes place only when occasion demands. Training for military revolt means learning the use of arms ending perhaps in the atomic bomb. For civil disobedience it means the Constructive Programme.

Therefore, workers will never be on the look-out for civil resistance. They will hold themselves in readiness, if the constructive effort is sought to be defeated. From one or two illustrations it will be seen where it can be, and where it cannot be, offered. Political pacts we know have been and can be, but personal friendship with individuals cannot be, prevented. Such friendships, selfless and genuine, must be the basis for political pacts. Similarly, centralized *khadi* can be defeated by the Government, but no power can defeat individual manufacture and use of *khadi.* The manufacture and use of *khadi* must not be imposed upon the people, but it must be intelligently and willingly accepted by them as one of the items of the freedom movement. This can be done only from the villages as units. Pioneers even in such programmes can be obstructed. They have had to go through the fire of suffering throughout the world. There is no Swaraj without suffering. In violence, truth is the first and the greatest sufferer; in non-violence it is ever triumphant. Moreover, men composing the Government are not to be regarded as enemies. To regard them as such will be contrary to the non-violent spirit. Part we must, but as friends.

If this preliminary observation has gone home to the reader, he will find the constructive programme to be full of deep interest. It should prove as absorbing as politics so-called and platform oratory, and certainly more important and useful.

Poona, 13-11-1945 M. K. Gandhi

INTRODUCTORY

The constructive programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of Poorna Swaraj or complete Independence by truthful and non-violent means.

Effort for construction of Independence so called through violent and, therefore, necessarily untruthful means we know only too painfully. Look at the daily destruction of property, life and truth in the present war.

Complete Independence through truth and non-violence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without. Practice will always fall short of the theory, even as the drawn line falls short of the theoretical line of Euclid. Therefore, complete Independence will be complete only to the extent of our approach in practice to truth and non-violence.

Let the reader mentally plan out the whole of the constructive programme, and he will agree with me that, if it could be successfully worked out, the end of it would be the Independence we want. Has not Mr. Amery said that an agreement between the major parties, translated in my language, any agreement *after* communal unity which is only one item in the constructive programme, will be respected? We need not question his sincerity, for, if such unity is honestly, i.e., non-violently, attained, it will in itself contain the power to compel acceptance of the agreed demand.

On the other hand there is no such thing as an imaginary or even perfect definition of Independence through violence. For, it presupposes only ascendancy of that party of the nation which makes the most effective use of violence. In it perfect equality, economic or otherwise, is inconceivable.

But for my purpose, which is to convince the reader of the necessity of following out the constructive programme in the non-violent effort, the acceptance of my argument about the ineffectiveness of violence for the attainment of Independence is not required. The reader is welcome to the belief that Independence of the humblest unit is possible under a scheme of violence, if this effort enables him also to admit that it is a certainty through the complete execution of the programme by the nation.

Let us now examine the items.

1. COMMUNAL UNITY

Everybody is agreed about the necessity of this unity. But everybody does not know that unity does not mean political unity which may be imposed. It means an unbreakable heart unity. The first thing essential for achieving such unity is for every Congress-man, whatever his religion may be, to represent in his own person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc., shortly, every Hindu and non-Hindu. He has to feel his identity with every one of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realize this, every Congressman will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own. He should have the same regard for the other faiths as he has for his own.

In such a happy state of things there would be no disgraceful cry at the stations such as "Hindu water" and "Muslim water" or "Hindu tea" and "Muslim tea". There would be no separate rooms or pots for Hindus and non-Hindus in schools and colleges, no communal schools, colleges and hospitals. The beginning of such a revolution has to be made by Congressmen without any political motive behind the correct conduct. Political unity will be its natural fruit.

We have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through Legislative Assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism.

A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people. It has been my effort for the last twenty-one years to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil Disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature, and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance! They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people who are out for suffering to the uttermost.

And Parliamentary procedure is good only when its members are willing to conform to the will of the majority. In other words, it is fairly effective only among compatibles.

Here in India we have been pretending to work the parliamentary system under separate electorates which have created artificial incompatibles. Living unity can never come out of these artificial entities being brought together on a common platform. Such legislatures may function. But they can only be a platform for wrangling and sharing the crumbs of power that may fall from rulers whoever they may be. These rule with a rod of iron, and prevent the opposing elements from flying at one another's throats. I hold the emergence of complete Independence to be an impossibility out of such a disgrace.

Though I hold such strong views, I have come to the conclusion that so long as there are undesirable candidates for elective bodies, Congress should put up candidates in order to prevent reactionaries from entering such bodies.

2. REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

At this time of the day it is unnecessary to dilate upon the necessity of the removal of this blot and curse upon Hinduism. Congressmen have certainly done much in this matter. But I am sorry to have to say that many Congressmen have looked upon this item as a mere political necessity and not something indispensable, so far as Hindus are concerned, for the very existence of Hinduism. If Hindu Congressmen take up the cause for its own sake, they will influence the so-called *Sanatanis* far more extensively than they have hitherto done. They should approach them not in a militant spirit but, as befits their non-violence, in a spirit of friendliness. And so far as the Harijans are concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation—such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India. I know from experience how difficult the task is. But it is part of the task of building the edifice of Swaraj. And the road to Swaraj is steep and narrow. There are many slippery ascents and many deep chasms. They have all to be negotiated with unfaltering step before we can reach the summit and breathe the fresh air of freedom.

3. PROHIBITION

Although like communal unity and removal of untouchability prohibition has been on the Congress programme since 1920, Congressmen have not taken the interest they might have taken in this very vital social and moral reform. If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future government the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics.

Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways

of weaning the drunkard and the opium-addict from the curse.

Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit.

Congress committees can open recreation booths where the tired labourer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refreshments, and find suitable games. All this work is fascinating and uplifting. The non-violent approach to Swaraj is a novel approach. In it old values give place to new. In the violent way such reforms may find no place. Believers in that way, in their impatience and, shall I say, ignorance, put off such things to the day of deliverance. They forget that lasting and healthy deliverance comes from within, i.e. from self-purification. Constructive workers make legal prohibition easy and successful even if they do not pave the way for it.

4. KHADI

Khadi is a controversial subject. Many people think that in advocating *Khadi* I am sailing against a headwind and am sure to sink the ship of Swaraj and that I am taking the country to the dark ages. I do not propose to argue the case for *Khadi* in this brief survey. I have argued it sufficiently elsewhere. Here I want to show what every Congressman, and for that matter every Indian, can do to advance the cause of *Khadi.* It connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." Let everyone try, and he or she will find out for himself or herself the truth of what I am saying. *Khadi* must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the

existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties.

This needs a revolutionary change in the mentality and tastes of many. Easy though the non-violent way is in many respects, it is very difficult in many others. It vitally touches the life of every single Indian, makes him feel aglow with the possession of a power that has lain hidden within himself, and makes him proud of his identity with every drop of the ocean of Indian humanity. This non-violence is not the inanity for which we have mistaken it through all these long ages; it is the most potent force as yet known to mankind and on which its very existence is dependent. It is that force which I have tried to present to the Congress and through it to the world. *Khadi* to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the livery of India's freedom".

Moreover, *Khadi* mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all its necessaries and a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities.

Heavy industries will needs be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the villages.

Having explained the implications of *Khadi,* I must indicate what Congressmen can and should do towards its promotion. Production of *Khadi* includes cotton growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and the woof, weaving, and washing. These, with the exception of dyeing, are essential processes. Every one of them can be effectively handled in the villages and is being so handled in many villages through-

out India which the A.I.S.A. is covering. According to the latest report the following are the interesting figures:

2,75,146 villagers, including 19,645 Harijans and 57,378 Muslims, scattered in at least 13,451 villages received, as spinners, weavers, etc. Rs. 34,85,609 in 1940. The spinners were largely women.

Yet the work done is only one-hundredth part of what could be done if Congressmen honestly took up the *Khadi* programme. Since the wanton destruction of this central village industry and the allied handicrafts, intelligence and brightness have fled from the villages, leaving them inane, lustreless, and reduced almost to the state of their ill-kept cattle.

If Congressmen will be true to their Congress call in respect of *Khadi,* they will carry out the instructions of the A.I.S.A. issued from time to time as to the part they can play in *Khadi* planning. Only a few broad rules can be laid down here:

1. Every family with a plot of ground can grow cotton at least for family use. Cotton growing is an easy process. In Bihar the cultivators were by law compelled to grow indigo on 3/20 of their cultivable land. This was in the interest of the foreign indigo planter. Why cannot we grow cotton voluntarily for the nation on a certain portion of our land? The reader will note that decentralization commences from the beginning of the *Khadi* processes. Today cotton crop is centralized and has to be sent to distant parts of India. Before the war it used to be sent principally to Britain and Japan. It was and still is a money crop and, therefore, subject to the fluctuations of the market. Under the *Khadi* scheme cotton growing becomes free from this uncertainty and gamble. The grower grows what he needs. The farmer needs to know that his first business is to grow for his own needs. When he does that, he will reduce the chance of a low market ruining him.

2. Every spinner would buy—if he has not his own—enough cotton for ginning, which he can easily do without

the hand-ginning roller frame. He can gin his own portion with a board and an iron rolling pin. Where this is considered impracticable, hand-ginned cotton should be bought and carded. Carding for self can be done well on a tiny bow without much effort. The greater the decentralization of labour, the simpler and cheaper the tools. The slivers made, the process of spinning commences. I strongly recommend the *dhanush takli.* I have used it frequently. My speed on it is almost the same as on the wheel. I draw a finer thread and the strength and evenness of the yarn are greater on the *dhanush takli* than on the wheel. This may not, however, hold good for all. My emphasis on the *dhanush takli* is based on the fact that it is more easily made, is cheaper than and does not require frequent repairs like the wheel. Unless one knows how to make the two *mals* and to adjust them when they slip or to put the wheel right when it refuses to work, the wheel has often to lie idle. Moreover, if the millions take to spinning at once, as they well may have to, the *dhanush takli,* being the instrument most easily made and handled, is the only tool that can meet the demand. It is more easily made even than the simple *takli.* The best, easiest and cheapest way is to make it oneself. Indeed one ought to learn how to handle and make simple tools. Imagine the unifying and educative effect of the whole nation simultaneously taking part in the process up to spinning! Consider the levelling effect of the bond of common labour between the rich and the poor!

Yarn thus produced may be used in three ways: by presenting it to the A.I.S.A. for the sake of the poor, by having it woven for personal use, or by getting as much *Khadi* for it as it can buy. It is clear enough that the finer and better the yarn the greater will be its value. If Congressmen will put their heart into the work, they will make improvements in the tools and make many discoveries. In our country there has been a divorce between labour and intelligence. The result has been stagnation. If there is an indissoluble marriage between the two, and that in the

manner here suggested, the resultant good will be inestimable.

In this scheme of nation-wide spinning as a sacrifice, I do not expect the average man or woman to give more than one hour daily to this work.

5. OTHER VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

These stand on a different footing from *Khadi.* There is not much scope for voluntary labour in them. Each industry will take the labour of only a certain number of hands. These industries come in as a handmaid to *Khadi.* They cannot exist without *Khadi,* and *Khadi* will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing, etc. Congressmen can interest themselves in these and, if they are villagers or will settle down in villages, they will give these industries a new life and a new dress. All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Given the demand there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.

6. VILLAGE SANITATION

Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose:

such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. If the majority of Congressmen were derived from our villages, as they should be, they should be able to make our villages models of cleanliness in every sense of the word. But they have never considered it their duty to identify themselves with the villagers in their daily lives. A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of a bath, but we do not mind dirtying the well or the tank or the river by whose side or in which we perform ablutions. I regard this defect as a great vice which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred banks of the sacred rivers and for the diseases that spring from insanitation.

7. NEW OR BASIC EDUCATION

This is a new subject. But the members of the Working Committee felt so much interested in it that they gave a charter to the organizers of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh which has been functioning since the Haripura session. This is a big field of work for many Congressmen. This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages. Congressmen who want to build up the structure of Swaraj from its very foundation dare not neglect the children. Foreign rule has unconsciously, though none the less surely, begun with the children in the field of education. Primary education is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India of the villages and for that matter even of the cities. Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school. Congressmen would find it of absorbing interest benefiting themselves equally with the children with

whom they come in contact. Let those who wish, put themselves in touch with the Secretary of the Sangh at Sevagram.

8. ADULT EDUCATION

This has been woefully neglected by Congressmen. Where they have not neglected it, they have been satisfied with teaching illiterates to read and write. If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. The villager's India is contained in his village. If he goes to another village, he talks of his own village as his home. Hindustan is for him a geographical term. We have no notion of the ignorance prevailing in the villages. The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils. What little knowledge they have picked up fills them with the awe the foreigner inspires. The result is the dread and hatred of the foreigner and his rule. They do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner's presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education means, therefore, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. Seeing that this will be mapped out, it can be given without fear. I imagine that it is too late in the day for authority to interfere with this type of education; but if there is interference, there must be a fight for this elementary right without which there can be no Swaraj. Of course, in all I have written, openness has been assumed. Non-violence abhors fear and, therefore, secrecy. Side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education. This is itself a speciality. Many methods are being tried in order to shorten the period of education. A temporary or permanent board of experts may be appointed by the Working Committee to give shape to the idea here adumbrated and guide the workers. I admit that what I have said in this paragraph only points the way but does not tell

the average Congressman how to go about it. Nor is every Congressman fitted for this highly special work. But Congressmen who are teachers should find no difficulty in laying down a course in keeping with the suggestions made herein.

9. WOMEN

I have included service of women in the constructive programme, for though *satyagraha* has automatically brought India's women out from their darkness, as nothing else could have in such an incredibly short space of time, Congressmen have not felt the call to see that women became equal partners in the fight for Swaraj. They have not realized that woman must be the true helpmate of man in the mission of service. Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fulness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is the privilege of Congressmen to give the women of India a lifting hand. Women are in the position somewhat of the slave of old who did not know that he could or ever had to be free. And when freedom came, for the moment he felt helpless. Women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. It is up to Congressmen to see that they enable them to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men.

This revolution is easy, if the mind is made up. Let Congressmen begin with their own homes. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence, but should be treated as

honoured comrades in common service. To this end those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instruction as is possible from their husbands. The same observation applies, with the necessary changes, to mothers and daughters.

It is hardly necessary to point out that I have given a one-sided picture of the helpless state of India's women. I am quite conscious of the fact that in the villages generally they hold their own with their men folk and in some respects even rule them. But to the impartial outsider the legal and customary status of woman is bad enough throughout and demands radical alteration.

10. EDUCATION IN HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Having given a place to village sanitation, the question may be asked why give a separate place to education in health and hygiene? It might have been bracketed with sanitation, but I did not wish to interfere with the items. Mention of mere sanitation is not enough to include health and hygiene. The art of keeping one's health and the knowledge of hygiene is by itself a separate subject of study and corresponding practice. In a well-ordered society the citizens know and observe the laws of health and hygiene. It is established beyond doubt that ignorance and neglect of the laws of health and hygiene are responsible for the majority of diseases to which mankind is heir. The very high death rate among us is no doubt due largely to our gnawing poverty, but it could be mitigated if the people were properly educated about health and hygiene.

Mens sana in corpore sano is perhaps the first law for humanity. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a self-evident truth. There is an inevitable connection between mind and body. If we were in possession of healthy minds, we would shed all violence and, naturally obeying the laws of health, we would have healthy bodies without an effort. I hope, there-

fore, that no Congressmen will disregard this item of the constructive programme. The fundamental laws of health and hygiene are simple and easily learnt. The difficulty is about their observance. Here are some:

Think the purest thoughts and banish all idle and impure thoughts.

Breathe the freshest air day and night.

Establish a balance between bodily and mental work.

Stand erect, sit erect, and be neat and clean in every one of your acts, and let these be an expression of your inner condition.

Eat to live for service of fellow-men. Do not live for indulging yourselves. Hence your food must be just enough to keep your mind and body in good order. Man becomes what he eats.

Your water, food and air must be clean, and you will not be satisfied with mere personal cleanliness, but you will infect your surroundings with the same threefold cleanliness that you will desire for yourselves.

11. PROVINCIAL LANGUAGES

Our love of the English language in preference to our own mother tongue has caused a deep chasm between the educated and politically-minded classes and the masses. The languages of India have suffered impoverishment. We flounder when we make the vain attempt to express abstruse thought in the mother tongue. There are no equivalents for scientific terms. The result has been disastrous. The masses remain cut off from the modern mind. We are too near our own times correctly to measure the disservice caused to India by this neglect of its great languages. It is easy enough to understand that, unless we undo the mischief, the mass mind must remain imprisoned. The masses can make no solid contribution to the construction of Swaraj. It is inherent in Swaraj based on non-violence that every individual

makes his own direct contribution to the Independence movement. The masses cannot do this fully unless they understand every step with all its implications. This is impossible unless every step is explained in their own languages.

12. NATIONAL LANGUAGE

And then for all-India intercourse we need, from among the Indian stock, a language which the largest number of people already know and understand and which the others can easily pick up. This language is indisputably Hindi. It is spoken and understood by both Hindus and Muslims of the North. It is called Urdu when it is written in the Urdu character. The Congress, in its famous resolution passed at the Cawnpore session in 1925, called this all-India speech Hindustani. And since that time, in theory at least, Hindustani has been the Rashtra Bhasha. I say 'in theory' because even Congressmen have not practised it as they should have. In 1920 a deliberate attempt was begun to recognize the importance of Indian languages for the political education of the masses, as also of an all-India common speech which politically-minded India could easily speak and which Congressmen from the different provinces could understand at all-India gatherings of the Congress. Such National languages should enable one to understand and speak both forms of speech and write in both the scripts.

I am sorry to have to say that many Congressmen have failed to carry out that resolution. And so we have, in my opinion, the shameful spectacle of Congressmen insisting on speaking in English and compelling others to do likewise for their sakes. The spell that English has cast on us is not yet broken. Being under it, we are impeding the progress of India towards her goal. Our love of the masses must be skin-deep, if we will not take the trouble of spending over learning Hindustani as many months as the years we spend over learning English.

13. ECONOMIC EQUALITY

This last is the master key to non-violent Independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.

I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort. It involves a daily growing appreciation of the working of non-violence. It is expected that Congressmen will make a diligent search and reason out for themselves the why and the wherefore of non-violence. They should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished violently or non-violently. I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere.

This non-violent experiment is still in the making. We have nothing much yet to show by way of demonstration. It is certain, however, that the method has begun to work though ever so slowly in the direction of equality. And since non-violence is a process of conversion, the conversion, if achieved, must be permanent. A society or a nation constructed non-violently must be able to withstand attack upon its structure from without or within. We have moneyed

Congressmen in the organization. They have to lead the way. This fight provides an opportunity for the closest heart-searching on the part of every individual Congressman. If ever we are to achieve equality, the foundation has to be laid now. Those who think that the major reforms will come after the advent of Swaraj are deceiving themselves as to the elementary working of non-violent Swaraj. It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort. We have travelled a fair way in that direction. But a much longer and weary distance has to be covered before we can behold Swaraj in its glorious majesty. Every Congressman has to ask himself what he has done towards the attainment of economic equality.

14. KISANS

The programme is not exhaustive. Swaraj is a mighty structure. Eighty crores of hands have to work at building it. Of these *kisans*, i.e., the peasantry are the largest part. In fact, being the bulk of them (probably over 80%) the *kisans* should be the Congress. But they are not. When they become conscious of their non-violent strength, no power on earth can resist them.

They must not be used for power politics. I consider it to be contrary to the non-violent method. Those who would know my method of organizing *kisans* may profitably study the movement in Champaran when *satyagraha* was tried for the first time in India with the result all India knows. It became a mass movement which remained wholly non-violent from start to finish. It affected over twenty lakhs of *kisans*. The struggle centred round one specific grievance which was a century old. There had been several violent revolts to get rid of the grievance. The *kisans* were suppressed. The non-violent remedy succeeded in full in six months. The *kisans* of Champaran became politically conscious without any direct effort. The tangible proof they had of the

working of non-violence to remove their grievance drew them to the Congress, and led by Babu Brijkishoreprasad and Babu Rajendraprasad they gave a good account of themselves during the past Civil Disobedience campaigns.

The reader may also profitably study the *kisan* movements in Kheda, Bardoli and Borsad. The secret of success lies in a refusal to exploit the *kisans* for political purpose outside their own personal and felt grievances. Organization round a specific wrong they understand. They need no sermons on non-violence. Let them learn to apply non-violence as an effective remedy which they can understand, and later when they are told that the method they were applying was non-violent, they readily recognize it as such.

From these illustrations Congressmen who care could study how work can be done for and among *kisans*. I hold that the method that some Congressmen have followed to organize *kisans* has done them no good and has probably harmed them. Anyway they have not used the non-violent method. Be it said to the credit of some of these workers that they frankly admit that they do not believe in the non-violent method. My advice to such workers would be that they should neither use the Congress name nor work as Congressmen.

The reader will now understand why I have refrained from the competition to organize *Kisans* and Labour on an all-India basis. How I wish that all hands pulled in the same direction! But perhaps in a huge country like ours it is impossible. Anyway, in non-violence there is no coercion. Cold reason and demonstration of the working of non-violence must be trusted to do the work.

In my opinion, like labour, they should have under the Congress, a department working for their specific question.

15. LABOUR

Ahmedabad Labour Union is a model for all India to copy. Its basis is non-violence, pure and simple. It has never had a

set-back in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its schools for the children of the mill-hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and *khadi* depot, and its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections. They came on the voters' list at the instance of the Provincial Congress Committee. The organization has never taken part in party politics of the Congress. It influences the municipal policy of the city. It has to its credit very successful strikes which were wholly non-violent. Mill-owners and labour have governed their relations largely through voluntary arbitration. If I had my way, I would regulate all the labour organizations of India after the Ahmedabad model. It has never sought to intrude itself upon the All-India Trade Union Congress and has been uninfluenced by that Congress. A time, I hope, will come when it will be possible for the Trade Union Congress to accept the Ahmedabad method and have the Ahmedabad organization as part of the All-India Union. But I am in no hury. It will come in its own time.

16. ADIVASIS

The term *adivasi,* like *raniparaj,* is a coined word. *Raniparaj* stands for *kaliparaj* (meaning black people, though their skin is no more black than that of any other). It was coined, I think by Shri Jugatram. The term *adivasi* (for Bhils, Gonds, or others variously described as Hill Tribes or aboriginals) means literally original inhabitants and was coined, I believe, by Thakkar Bapa.

Service of *adivasis* is also a part of the constructive programme. Though they are the sixteenth number in this programme, they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one discovers this for oneself, one realizes how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation, unless every

unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other.

The *adivasis* are over two crores in all India. Bapa began work among the Bhils years ago in Gujarat. In about 1940 Shri Balasaheb Kher threw himself with his usual zeal into this much-needed service in the Thana District. He is now President of the Adivasi Seva Mandal.

There are several such other workers in other parts of India and yet they are too few. Truly, "the harvest is rich but the labourers are few." Who can deny that all such service is not merely humanitarian but solidly national, and brings us nearer to true independence?

17. LEPERS

Leper is a word of bad odour. India is perhaps a home of lepers next only to Central Africa. Yet they are as much a part of society as the tallest among us. But the tall absorb our attention though they are least in need of it. The lot of the lepers who are much in need of attention is studied neglect. I am tempted to call it heartless, which it certainly is, in terms of non-violence. It is largely the missionary who, be it said to his credit, bestows care on him. The only institution run by an Indian, as a pure labour of love, is by Shri Manohar Diwan near Wardha. It is working under the inspiration and guidance of Shri Vinoba Bhave. If India was pulsating with new life, if we were all in earnest about winning independence in the quickest manner possible by truthful and non-violent means, there would not be a leper or beggar in India uncared for and unaccounted for. In this revised edition I am deliberately introducing the leper as a link in the chain of constructive effort. For, what the leper is in India, that we are, if we will but look about us, for the modern civilized world. Examine the condition of our brethren across the ocean and the truth of my remark will be borne home to us.

18. STUDENTS

I have reserved students to the last. I have always cultivated close contact with them. They know me and I know them. They have given me service. Many ex-collegians are my esteemed co-workers. I know that they are the hope of the future. In the heyday of non-co-operation they were invited to leave their schools and colleges. Some professors and students who responded to the Congress call have remained steadfast and gained much for the country and themselves. The call has not been repeated for there is not the atmosphere for it. But experience has shown that the lure of the current education, though it is false and unnatural, is too much for the youth of the country. College education provides a career. It is a passport for entrance to the charmed circle. Pardonable hunger for knowledge cannot be satisfied otherwise than by going through the usual rut. They do not mind the waste of precious years in acquiring knowledge of an utterly foreign language which takes the place of the mother tongue. The sin of it is never felt. They and their teachers have made up their minds that the indigenous languages are useless for gaining access to modern thought and the modern sciences. I wonder how the Japanese are faring. For, their education, I understand, is all given in Japanese. The Chinese Generalissimo knows very little, if anything, of English.

But such as the students are, it is from these young men and women that the future leaders of the nation are to rise. Unfortunately they are acted upon by every variety of influences. Non-violence offers them little attraction. A blow for a blow or two for one is an easily understandable proposition. It seems to yield immediate result though momentary. It is a never-ending trial of brute strength as we see in time of war among brutes or among human beings. Appreciation of non-violence means patient research and still more patient and difficult practice. I have not entered the list of competitors for the students' hand, for the reasons that have dictated my

course about *Kisans* and Labour. But I am myself a fellow student, using the word in its broader sense. My university is different from theirs. They have a standing invitation from me to come to my university and join me in my search. Here are the terms:

1. Students must not take part in party politics. They are students, searchers, not politicians.

2. They may not resort to political strikes. They must have their heroes, but their devotion to them is to be shown by copying the best in their heroes, not by going on strikes, if the heroes are imprisoned or die or are even sent to the gallows. If their grief is unbearable and if all the students feel equally, schools or colleges may be closed on such occasions, with the consent of their principals. If the principals will not listen, it is open to the students to leave their institutions in a becoming manner till the managers repent and recall them. On no account may they use coercion against dissentients or against the authorities. They must have the confidence that, if they are united and dignified in their conduct, they are sure to win.

3. They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner. Their tools shall be always neat, clean, and in good order and condition. If possible, they will learn to make them themselves. Their yarn will naturally be of the highest quality. They will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications.

4. They will be *khadi*-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made.

5. They may not impose *Vande Mataram* or the National Flag on others. They may wear National Flag buttons on their own persons but not force others to do the same.

6. They can enforce the message of the tricolour flag in their own persons and harbour neither communalism nor untouchability in their hearts. They will cultivate real friendship with students of other faiths and with Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin.

7. They will make it a point to give first aid to their injured neighbours and do scavenging and cleaning in the neighbouring villages and instruct village children and adults.

8. They will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and *nagari* or *urdu* script is written.

9. They will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages.

10. They will do nothing in secret, they will be above board in all their dealings, they will lead a pure life of self-restraint, shed all fear and be always ready to protect their weak fellow-students, and be ready to quell riots by non-violent conduct at the risk of their lives. And when the final heat of the struggle comes they will leave their institutions and, if need be, sacrifice themselves for the freedom of their country.

11. They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their girl fellow-students.

For working out the programme I have sketched for them, the students must find time. I know that they waste a great deal of time in idleness. By strict economy, they can save many hours. But I do not want to put an undue strain upon any student. I would, therefore, advise patriotic students to lose one year, not at a stretch but spread it over their whole study. They will find that one year so given will not be a waste of time. The effort will add to their equipment, mental, moral and physical, and they will have made even during their studies a substantial contribution to the freedom movement.

PLACE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

I have said in these pages that Civil Disobedience is not absolutely necessary to win freedom through purely non-

violent effort, if the co-operation of the whole nation is secured in the constructive programme. But such good luck rarely favours nations or individuals. Therefore, it is necessary to know the place of Civil Disobedience in a nation-wide non-violent effort.

It has three definite functions:

1. It can be effectively offered for the redress of a local wrong.

2. It can be offered without regard to effect, though aimed at a particular wrong or evil, by way of self-immolation in order to rouse local consciousness or conscience. Such was the case in Champaran when I offered Civil Disobedience without any regard to the effect and well knowing that even the people might remain apathetic. That it proved otherwise may be taken, according to taste, as God's grace or a stroke of good luck.

3. In the place of full response to constructive effort, it can be offered as it was in 1941. Though it was a contribution to and part of the battle for freedom, it was purposely centred round a particular issue, i.e. free speech. Civil Disobedience can never be directed for a general cause such as for Independence. The issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield. This method properly applied must lead to the final goal.

I have not examined here the full scope and possibilities of Civil Disobedience. I have touched enough of it to enable the reader to understand the connection between the constructive programme and Civil Disobedience. In the first two cases, no elaborate constructive programme was or could be necessary. But when Civil Disobedience is itself devised for the attainment of Independence, previous preparation is necessary, and it has to be backed by the visible and conscious effort of those who are engaged in the battle. Civil Disobedience is thus a stimulation for the fighters and a challenge to the opponent. It should be clear to the reader that Civil Disobedience in terms of Independence without

the co-operation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless.

CONCLUSION

This is not a thesis written on behalf of the Congress or at the instance of the Central Office. It is the outcome of conversations I had with some co-workers in Sevagram. They had felt the want of something from my pen showing the connection between the constructive programme and Civil Disobedience and how the former might be worked. I have endeavoured to supply the want in this pamphlet. It does not purport to be exhaustive, but it is sufficiently indicative of the way the programme should be worked.

Let not the reader make the mistake of laughing at any of the items as being part of the movement for Independence. Many people do many things, big and small, without connecting them with non-violence or Independence. They have then their limited value as expected. The same man appearing as a civilian may be of no consequence, but appearing in his capacity as General he is a big personage, holding the lives of millions at his mercy. Similarly, the *charkha* in the hands of a poor widow brings a paltry pice to her, in the hands of a Jawaharlal it is an instrument of India's freedom. It is the office which gives the *charkha* its dignity. It is the office assigned to the constructive programme which gives it an irresistible prestige and power.

Such at least is my view. It may be that of a mad man. If it makes no appeal to the Congressman, I must be rejected. For my handling of Civil Disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon.

Poona, 13-11-1945

APPENDICES

I

IMPROVEMENT OF CATTLE

[This is what Gandhiji wrote sometime ago about adding *Goseva* as one more item in the Constructive Programme.

J. Desai]

Extract from a letter written by Gandhiji to Shri Jivanji Desai:

Sodepur,
16-1-'46

"...You are right; cow service *(goseva)* should be included as one more item in the Constructive Programme. I would phrase it as improvement of cattle. I think it should not have been left out. We shall see about it when the next edition is out."

II

CONGRESS POSITION

Indian National Congress which is the oldest national political organization and which has after many battles fought her non-violent way to freedom cannot be allowed to die. It can only die with the nation. A living organism ever grows or it dies. The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular. All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions.

The Congress has got the preliminary and necessary part of her freedom. The hardest has yet to come. In its difficult ascent to democracy, it has inevitably created rotten boroughs leading to corruption and creation of institutions, popular and democratic only in name. How to get out of the weedy and unwieldy growth?

The Congress *must* do away with its special register of members, at no time exceeding one crore, not even then easily identifiable. It has an unknown register of millions who could never be wanted. Its register should now be co-extensive with all the men and women on the voters' rolls in the country. The Congress business should be to see that no faked name gets in and no legitimate name is left out. On its own register it will have a body of servants of the nation who would be workers doing the work allotted to them from time to time.

Unfortunately for the country they will be drawn chiefly for the time being from the city dwellers, most of whom would be required to work for and in the villages of India. The ranks must be filled in increasing numbers from villagers.

These servants will be expected to operate upon and serve the voters registered according to law, in their own surroundings. Many persons and parties will woo them. The very best will win. Thus and in no other way can the Congress regain its fast ebbing unique position in the country. But yesterday the Congress was unwittingly the servant of the Nation, it was *khudai khidmatgar*—God's servant. Let it now proclaim to itself and the world that it is only God's servant—nothing more, nothing less. If it engages in the ungainly skirmish for power, it will find one fine morning that it is no more. Thank God, it is now no longer in sole possession of the field.

I have only opened to view the distant scene. If I have the time and health, I hope to discuss in these columns what the servants of the Nation can *do* to raise themselves in the estimation of their masters, the whole of the adult population, male and femae.

New Delhi, 27-1-'48 M. K. Gandhi

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